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# The Defenestration of Democracy

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# **DISSIDENT KNOWLEDGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
MARC SPOONER  
& JAMES McNINCH**



**University of Regina Press**

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"An Interview with Noam Chomsky" © 2016 Noam Chomsky, Marc Spooner, and James McNinch

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## AFTERWORD

# THE DEFENESTRATION OF DEMOCRACY

Peter McLaren

*Victory was won through gusts of optimism mixed with white-knuckled rage and weapons-grade vitriol. It swept through the white picket fences and onto the porches of America's heartland like a chilly fall breeze teasing a candle flame inside a jack-o'-lantern. Suddenly, its smiling rictus began to resemble the chestburster from Alien, a horrific countenance with a row of pointy, glittering, gold-capped teeth. Ill winds began to blow. Something wicked this way came. Its skin was shellacked orange and had matching coloured hair (now apparently dyed white). It announced itself in a bellicose populist voice. And it spoke chaos. A ban nigheachain was seen standing atop the steps of the Lincoln Memorial keening for the nation. She was last seen at the reflecting pool, which gleamed red as she began washing the blood from the clothes of all those who were about to die as a result of actions to be taken by the new administration. And the numbers, they were legion. The grass on all the country's golf courses suddenly turned brown.*

**T**his book is going into publication just one year after Donald Trump became the forty-fifth president of the United States. Not surprisingly, events of world-historical importance are happening very quickly. By the time the book is launched at national and international venues, it is unclear how many more disastrous decisions and corporate giveaways

will have been made and horrors countenanced by the new White House administration and whether or not the Doomsday Clock will have already struck midnight.

The United States was shaken out of electoral somnolence, as more Trump supporters than expected crawled out of the woodwork to vote, fomenting a whitelash of extraordinary proportions. They came from former railroad towns where the Rust Belt meets Appalachia, from dirt poor white neighbourhoods adjacent to petrochemical processing refineries, where parents grew tired of their children coughing up blood-flecked, blackened phlegm. To get to the polling stations, they passed through ghost towns in rural Tennessee, where shuttered general stores and demolished dime-a-dance halls held nothing but empty memories of earlier generations. They came from neighbourhoods in Iowa where plants were no longer producing tower cranes and had laid off thousands of workers. Supporters of the Orange Leviathan included spindle-shanked retirees in eastern Kentucky, living behind the eight ball on straw mattresses in abandoned horse trailers, angry at the immigrants passing them by on the ladder. Even those laid-off coal plant workers, forced down railroad tracks with their bindle-sticks flung over their shoulders, fighting graybacks and a disposable future with nothing left but a ten-dollar bill hidden in the heel of their boot, wore Trump's trademark red cap, emblazoned with the now famous phrase, "Make America Great Again" (Trump had blamed environmental regulation for the loss of coal mining jobs, without mentioning the country's pivot to the exploitation of another fossil fuel, natural gas, that can be an even worse generator of greenhouse gas than coal). Hapless young vagrants and itinerant workers huddled in abandoned coal-loading stations, shooting up OxyContin (known locally as "hillbilly heroin"), with nothing left but to "Catch the Westbound" (as the saying went during the Great Depression), were all behind Trump, even if they were too stoned to cast their ballots. With medically uninsured arthritic knees and aching kidneys, the labouring poor embedded in capital's extractive essence—immiseration and privation—marched to the beat of nationalism, bemoaning the appearance of brown faces in the industrial yards and agricultural fields that spoke a language they could not understand.

They trekked through the dirt roads of Beaufort County, South Carolina, and Duplin County to the north, past acres of pasture-raised Berkshire pigs. They travelled to where they had last registered to vote, even if it meant a trip across the North Georgia mountains, through Clayton and Dillard, all the way to Chattanooga. Truckers for Trump drove their eighteen-wheelers through

the low country of Louisiana, gator teeth swinging from the rearview windows, so they could put the man in the red cap into office.

For those who were experiencing city life, you did not have to be on the rocks, or live on the nickel in penthouses made out of cardboard strewn through the streets of skid row, “with cupped hands round the tin can,” as John Hartford or Glen Campbell might put it, in order to be a Trump supporter. Although generally risk-averse, many in the wage-labour-rich-class, including socially registered suburban dwellers who loathed plebian socialities and were often unforgiving of the errors of their own employees, pushed for a Trump win, hoping that a further deregulation of the business world might bring them some fast cash, at least enough to stoke their meagre retirement savings before the system eventually fell apart like it did in 2008. Some folks were just looking for a good luck charm in the man with the Midas touch, without anticipating that Trump’s economic plan would raise taxes on eight million low- and middle-class families while providing massive tax breaks for the rich. It is no secret, especially in the hinterlands of the unemployed, that the Internet and its burgeoning platforms of automation are poised to cut half of U.S. jobs in the very near future. All of these Trump supporters, both the bedraggled and bon vivant, were feeling trapped in Palookaville with Trump their only hope for reaching Xanadu as they followed “the Donald” like a mesmerized Sonny Malone running after a roller-skating Terpsichore played by Olivia Newton-John. After all, Trump could sing a good populist tune, and it was music to the ears of those down on their luck and fearful of being left behind. Perhaps, on the wings of a foul-mouthed billionaire playboy, factory ghost towns could be replaced by Vegas versions of Fourier’s phalanstères.

For many of those hooked on drugs, it was too late to enjoy a Trump victory, or to see what kind of health care program Trump would put in place of Obamacare. In Stark County, Ohio, people down on their luck shoot up meth mixed with carfentanyl, an animal tranquilizer that is normally used on elephants and tigers, and is one hundred times more powerful than fentanyl (Siemaszko 2017). There are so many overdose fatalities that the coroner’s office in Canton has to borrow a twenty-foot-long, cold storage, mass casualty trailer, known as the “death trailer,” normally used for victims of airplane disasters, since its morgue facility in the county jail complex on Atlantic Boulevard, which holds about a dozen bodies, cannot deal with the body count. The coroners in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, and Summit County have to do the same thing—call in the death trailers. In Montgomery County, to the south, the coroner calls local funeral home directors for help (Siemaszko 2017).

Perry Anderson (2017) captures the political ramifications of the election when he writes that, in the United States, issues of national identity, neoliberal austerity, capitalism, and fear of immigration provided the

conditions in which a U.S. Republican presidential candidate of unprecedented background and temperament—abhorrent to mainstream bipartisan opinion, with no attempt to conform to accepted codes of civil or political conduct, and disliked by many of his actual voters—could appeal to enough disregarded white rust-belt workers to win the election. As in Britain, desperation outweighed apprehension in deindustrialised proletarian regions. There too, much more rawly and openly, in a country with a deeper history of native racism, immigrants were denounced and barriers, physical as well as procedural, demanded. Above all, empire was not a distant memory of the past but a vivid attribute of the present and natural claim on the future, yet it had been cast aside by those in power in the name of a globalization that meant ruin for ordinary people and humiliation for their country. Donald Trump's slogan was "Make America Great Again"—prosperous in discarding the fetishes of free movement of goods and labour, and victorious in ignoring the trammels and pieties of multilateralism: he was not wrong to proclaim that his triumph was Brexit writ large. It was a much more spectacular revolt, since it was not confined to a single—for most people, symbolic—issue, and was devoid of any establishment respectability or editorial blessing.

The irony was not lost on much of the nation that the candidate who was ridiculed for his small hands and seeming in need of a gris-gris bag full of Johnny Jump Up (or at least some high-grade Viagra) turned out to be the most politically potent candidate of all. Much of the Trump win can be chalked up to a vitriolic reaction to what is perceived as Washington's elite and politically correct liberal establishment, a refusal to be disintoxicated from the hatred of the first Black president of the United States, threats of immiseration, and the fear of a white minority race. The latter is a phenomenon that many right-wing movements refer to as "demographic winter," a white supremacist interpretation of the world's falling birth rate, or "birth dearth." This particular group of nativist "dearthers," alarmed by the declining Caucasian population in the United States, blames gays and lesbians,

environmentalists, population control advocates, supporters of birth control, and common law couples who refuse to be legally married and even married heterosexual couples who fail to have sufficiently larger numbers of white children for what they see as the demise of the white race—including what they perceive as their racially defined experiences of dispossession as white people who have been passed over by the politically correct multiculturalists in Washington—all of which they understand to be contributing to the impending death of Western civilization. And they warn that Muslim families are reproducing faster than Christian families.

But there are other reasons why working-class whites especially would vote for a candidate and party that have traditionally not served the poor as well as the Democratic Party. The reason: the white working class resents the poor. And they resent as much or perhaps more those middle-class liberals who try to help the poor by pressuring the government to assist them. Many working-class whites appreciate government benefits but only when they are directly tied to work, such as Social Security payments and Medicare. But they resent welfare and Medicaid, food stamps, housing assistance, and payments to the poor or unemployed (Porter 2017). Working-class voters resent “the poor and urban liberal elites who can express enormous sympathy for the disenfranchised while ignoring the struggle of the white working class” (Porter 2017). There is little or no outrage shown among working-class whites when anti-poverty programs are cut to pay for tax cuts because they do not benefit from the social safety net. Eduardo Porter supports his argument by citing a book by Joan C. Williams, *White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America*:

Ms. Williams, a professor at the University of California Hastings College of the Law, writes that these struggling workers resent not only the poor beneficiaries of the government’s largess but also the liberal policy makers who seem to believe that only the poor are deserving of help. And they bristle at the perceived condescension of a liberal elite that seems to blame them for their failure to acquire the necessary skills to rise to the professional class. By contrast, they see themselves as hard-working citizens who struggle to make ends meet, only to be left out of many of the government programs their taxes pay for....“All they see is their stressed-out daily lives, and they resent subsidies and sympathy available to the poor,” Professor Williams wrote. (Porter 2017)



And, of course, there is also racial mistrust. According to Porter (2017),

Racial mistrust is never far from the surface: Only 13 percent of non-Hispanic whites draw benefits from means-tested programs, according to the Census Bureau analysis, compared with 42 percent of African-Americans and 36 percent of Hispanics. So while most beneficiaries of welfare programs are white, many working-class whites perceive them as schemes to hand their tax dollars to minorities.

It is not hard to see how “Mr. Trump’s agenda serves both race and class resentment” (Porter 2017). And when we look at how the repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) by the Trump administration (as presently envisioned) will likely force millions to abandon any hope of being able to afford health insurance, we wonder how working-class voters, who overwhelmingly cast their ballots for Trump, will react. Will those voters, say, from West Virginia’s McDowell County, which has high rates of chronic illnesses and the shortest life expectancy in the United States, regret how they cast their ballots? Or will their loathing of liberal elites and “politically correct” left-wing radicals take precedence in their minds and offer them sufficient consolation that they made the right decision to vote for Trump?

Mississippi lawmakers have just advanced a proposal to add the firing squad, electrocution, and the gas chamber as execution methods—known as House Bill 638—in the event that a court blocks the use of lethal injection drugs. Republican House Judiciary B Committee Chairman Andy Gipson described this as a response to “liberal, left-wing radicals” (The Associated Press 2017). This could be good news for capitalism’s “reserve army of labor,” which Marx used to refer to the unemployed or underemployed in a capitalist economy, since, thanks to the school-to-prison pipeline designed for African Americans, there will always be plenty of jobs in the prison industrial complex, which is likely to be expanded under the unabashed corporatism of a Trump presidency, and I am sure there will be a need for expert marksmen should firing squads come back into fashion.

A relentless stream of controversial events coming from the White House have made headlines since Trump took office and the post-truth presidency began to take shape. But that is hardly surprising considering previous behaviour from Trump, the candidate who called for violence against those who were protesting during his rallies, who mocked a disabled reporter, and

who was exposed when a 2005 tape surfaced of Trump bragging that his celebrity status allowed him to grab women sexually:

“I’ve gotta use some Tic Tacs, just in case I start kissing her,” Trump is heard to say on the tape, which the Washington Post released on Friday. “You know I’m automatically attracted to beautiful—I just start kissing them. It’s like a magnet. Just kiss. I don’t even wait...And when you’re a star they let you do it. You can do anything...Grab them by the pussy. You can do anything.” (Redden 2016)

And yet Trump had the audacity to post an incendiary claim on Twitter that accused former President Barack Obama of soiling the “very sacred election process” by allegedly tapping the phones in Trump Tower: “How low has President Obama gone to tapp [sic] my phones during the very sacred election process” (Moran 2017). Yes, President Trump, you certainly treated the election process as a very sacred event. Indeed, it is difficult to be surprised by any remarks made by Trump, who has learned to manage news cycles effectively by using his Twitter account to distract attention from controversies surrounding his administration.

The moment Donald Trump was sworn in as president of the United States, the LGBTQ, climate change, health care, and civil liberties pages disappeared from the White House website. Trump and Republican lawmakers, infected by a ghastly actuarialism, are planning the radical overhaul of the U.S. health care system, beginning with the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. This means shutting the doors on millions of Americans in need of health insurance. They also have their eyes on trimming benefits from Medicaid, Medicare, and dismantling the basic system of employer-sponsored health insurance. Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell silenced Senator Elizabeth Warren during a Senate hearing for reading a letter by Coretta Scott King, the widow of Martin Luther King Jr., written thirty years ago opposing the nomination of Jeff Sessions for a federal judgeship (Warren was a strong opponent of Sessions’s nomination for attorney general). Sessions had been accused, early in his career, of a shamefully soft investigation of a lynching of a Black man by two members of the Ku Klux Klan. Thanks to a Trump victory, he is now the U.S. attorney general, who is promising to be tough on crime and to “pull back” from monitoring police misconduct because it has negatively affected police morale. He also criticized Department of Justice reports on civil rights violations by police in places like Ferguson, Missouri, and Chicago as

“anecdotal,” even while admitting he had not read any of the reports. Trump has tried to push through legislation that would bar any non-U.S. citizen from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, or Yemen from entering the United States, and that would even prohibit green card and visa holders from these countries from returning to the United States for ninety days. That battle is still underway. And the deportation forces of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement have begun their ugly purge, while his architects are busy designing Trump’s “great, great wall.” And Trump’s National Security Advisor Michael Flynn has already resigned for lying about his communications with Russian intelligence personnel, followed by Attorney General Jeff Sessions recusing himself from overseeing possible probes of “Russiagate,” the Trump election campaign’s communications with Russian officials and its possible connections to the Russian hacking of the U.S. election.

Those private prison companies that invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in Trump’s presidential campaign saw their payoff recently when Jeff Sessions announced the reversal of the Obama administration’s directive to reduce the Justice Department’s use of private prisons. I wonder how many lawmakers in Arizona are going to consider changing the category of misdemeanour into that of a felony for some crimes in order to keep those prisons at maximum capacity. During the crack cocaine epidemic in the 1980s, the Ronald Reagan administration promoted the use of private prisons. According to McGlothlin (2016), “Arizona leads all other states in deals crafted for the private prison industry by guaranteeing 90 to 100 percent of prison beds will be filled in all six state-level private prison facilities.” The problem is that private prison companies have a guarantee occupancy clause, issuing contracts that force states to pay to fill a certain percentage of prison beds regardless of how many felons are incarcerated, “which ensures profits and revenues but at the cost of taxpayers” (McGlothlin 2016). According to McGlothlin (2016),

Arizona trumps all states’ inmates quotas with three private prison facilities requiring 100 percent occupancy. Critics argue that this provides incentives to keep prison beds full, running counter to many states’ trend of reducing prison populations, sentencing lengths and corrections spending.

In other words, the more incarceration, the higher the profits for the prison companies, and they often cut costs (such as education and addiction treatment programs) and increase revenue to ensure they meet their profit margin.

On the topic of education, Trump has proven extremely consequential should we seriously consider his demands, especially in light of the Betsy DeVos appointment—the abolishment of the Department of Education, working with the American Legion to enforce the Pledge of Allegiance in schools, routinely saluting the flag, and teaching American patriotism and celebrating the great historical accomplishments of the United States: “We will stop apologizing for America, and we will start celebrating America.... We will be united by our common cultures, values, and principles, becoming one American nation, one country under the one constitution, saluting one American flag—always saluting” (Provance 2016).

Audible in these demands is a call for the enforced docility of young Americans through erasing any viable possibility of developing a protagonistic agency by means of education. Trump further laments that “our public schools have grown up in a competition-free zone, surrounded by a very high union wall” and berates Democrats for taking “a strong stand against school choice” (“Donald Trump on Education”). Listeners are given cause to wonder: Will there be patriotism monitors in *Starship Troopers* combat attire, complete with M3 mobile infantry helmets patrolling the hallways? Will there be school suspensions for, say, students accurately linking the wholesale butchering of Native peoples by the United States cavalry to government-sponsored genocide during the U.S. Indian Wars that began in 1775 and did not officially end until 1924? Will students be taught to revere General Custer (as opposed to Crazy Horse or Sitting Bull) and those killed under his imperial command by eviscerating important historical context that could put into perspective the inhumanity and full measure of human depravity and pathology associated with the white settler state in its historical engagement with Native peoples? Will the portentously myopic understanding of the history of genocide of Native peoples in the United States be even more truncated out of existence than it is today? Will behaviour deemed impious toward our elected officials be rewarded with expulsion? Will the man in the Oval Office who exclaimed, “I love the poorly educated!” turn schools into patriotic boot camps, whose disciplinary codes and canonical particulars have been lifted from the film *Full Metal Jacket*?

Trump appointed Betsy DeVos, a wealthy, conservative, and Christian champion of the billion-dollar charter school industry.<sup>1</sup> Vice-President Mike Pence broke a tie vote on the DeVos nomination and handed over our children’s futures to a businesswoman who plans to radically defund public education. Steve King of Iowa recently introduced HR 610, The School Choice Act, a bill designed to eliminate the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

of 1965, which was instated as part of Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty," and representatives from Maryland, Texas, and Arizona have joined the proposed purge. According to Cimarusti (2017), HR 610 will use federal funds

to create "block grants" to be used to "distribute a portion of funds to parents who elect to enroll their child in a private school or to home-school their child." It would also roll back nutritional standards for free lunches for poor children.

Cimarusti (2017) described a recent meeting between DeVos and Trump and ten teachers and parents who had been invited to discuss education priorities for the Trump administration, which includes his signature reform initiative of providing vouchers for private and religious schools and rendering public schools powerless and poor:

Of the ten attendees, one was a public school teacher and one was a principal of a public school that specializes in special education. There was one public school parent who also had children in private school. The rest of the group were homeschoolers, charter school parents or private school representatives. During the meeting, Trump praised what he referred to as a "Nevada charter school" that he had visited. The school is actually a religious school which regularly excludes students with disabilities.

A video is available that shows children pledging allegiance to the Bible as Mr. Trump approvingly looks on ("Exclusive: Donald Trump Visits School").

Teachers at Westminster High School in Carroll County, Washington, were recently ordered to remove diversity posters they had put up around their school that depicted Latina, Muslim, and Black women. Artist Shepard Fairey, who received instant fame for his "Hope" posters featuring President Barack Obama in 2008, designed the posters. One of the posters reads, "We the people are greater than fear" (Liebelson 2017). At first, the teachers were accused of being anti-Trump by the administration but, after removing the posters, were allowed to put them up again. But then the administration stipulated that "the posters could be seen as political" and that they can only be put up in their classrooms if they are part of the formally sanctioned curriculum and both sides of any political issue are represented (Liebelson 2017). The next time some educational "expert" tells you that teaching is supposed to be—or could be—neutral, do not believe them, not even for

a New York minute! Only 4 per cent of Carroll County's school system identifies as minority. Is anyone surprised? Steven Johnson, the county's assistant superintendent for instruction, likens the diversity poster to the Confederate battle flag:

The Confederate flag in and of itself has no image of slavery or hatred or oppression, but it's symbolic of that.... These posters have absolutely no mention of Trump or any other political issue—it's the symbolism of what they were representing. They were carried in these protests. (Liebelson 2017)

The concealed hypothesis that underlies such positions is the proposition that acts of praising diversity and inclusion are somehow independent from the idea of national security. The logic seems to suggest that posters praising diversity and inclusion must be counterbalanced by something that supposedly represents an opposite meaning—Trump's war on undocumented immigrants. What has become of the profession of teaching when we cannot display racial and ethnic diversity on the walls of our classrooms? Diversity, inclusion, and the welcoming of immigrants are supposedly one of the pillars upon which the United States was built. The logic itself is repressive, not neutral. But it teaches us something. It teaches us that another pillar of U.S. culture is the ritual scapegoating of immigrants. A democratic system that procures an advantage to all immigrants is a system that procures an advantage for us all. The Trump administration, by contrast, exhibits a *bellum omnium contra omnes*—the war of all against all—position, where unwelcoming immigrants procures an advantage of security to the population that has forgotten its own immigrant roots.

Forgetting our roots is one of the consequences of banning books. Just months after Trump won the election, a bill was introduced in the Arkansas state legislature by Representative Kim Hendren—HB1834—that attempts to prohibit public schools in the state from assigning books or other material authored by the late author and historian, Howard Zinn, arguably the most important U.S. historian on the Left. The bill prohibits any of Zinn's works written between the years 1959 and 2010 to be used in public schools or open-enrolled public charter schools. In 2013, former Indiana Republican Governor Mitch Daniels attempted to remove all of Zinn's work from classrooms throughout Indiana. Daniels is now president of Purdue University.

Recently, DeVos issued a statement about historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs): that these institutions were “real pioneers when it

comes to school choice” (Allen 2017). This only displayed DeVos’s egregious ignorance about the historical context surrounding the creation of historically Black institutions of higher learning. Some interpreted her statement as applauding the Jim Crow segregated education system for giving Black students “more options” (Allen 2017). Morehouse President John Wilson Jr. responded to DeVos, calling HBCUs an example of “school choice” as follows:

“HBCUs were not created because the 4 million newly freed blacks were unhappy with the choices they had. They were created because they had no choices at all,” he said. “[I]f one does not understand the crippling and extended horrors of slavery, then how can one really understand the subsequent history and struggle of African Americans, or the current necessities and imperatives that grow out of that history and struggle?” (Finley 2017)

Alan Singer (2017) reports that stock value for private, for-profit “colleges” has soared since the election of Donald Trump and his race to dismantle federal regulations. These predatory educational institutions, which Singer (2017) notes “have been ripping-off the government and victimizing the poor, veterans, and evangelicals,” have been experiencing increased windfalls:

Strayer’s is up 35 percent, Grand Canyon almost 30 percent, and DeVry, which agreed to pay a hundred million dollars in debt relief and cash payments to settle a federal lawsuit for fraudulent advertising last December, more than 40 percent.

These colleges describe themselves in a language reserved for Disney imagineers working on a new installation to make Fantasyland even more fantastic, masquerading under the guise of a legitimate educational institution, but in reality are little more than dream factories intended to make their investors and managers wealthy. They aggressively market themselves to the military, “enrolling them in online programs while they are still on active duty” (Singer 2017). Military personnel use their GI Bill benefits to pay for their education, and, according to a 2014 Senate report, “eight for-profit college companies received about a fourth of all GI Bill benefit educational dollars,” and the cost of these institutions is approximately double that of public colleges (Singer 2017).

Trump has asked Jerry Falwell Jr., president of Liberty University, to head a task force that will explore further ways to deregulate American



higher education. Singer (2017) reminds us that Trump University “closed in 2010 and agreed to pay \$25 million in damages to settle a lawsuit by former students who charged they were defrauded when promised they would learn the secrets of Trump’s real estate success.” Many of these for-profit colleges, such as Corinthian Colleges, inflate their job placement rate for graduates. Corinthian, which filed for bankruptcy, was fined \$30 million by the federal Department of Education. According to Singer (2017), Falwell has made it clear that “his goal was eliminating Obama administration initiatives to ‘give colleges and their accrediting agencies more leeway in governing their affairs,’ which would allow companies like Trump, ITT, and Corinthian to rip-off a new generation of unsuspecting students, many U.S. military veterans, and American taxpayers who insure student loans.” Singer’s (2017) description of Liberty University should send chills down the spine of those interested in protecting public education from academic predation:

Falwell and his Liberty University would directly benefit if federal regulation was reduced or suspended. While it is primarily known as a mid-sized residential evangelical Christian college located in Lynchburg, Virginia, it also operates an enormous profit-making online program enrolling 65,000 students. This program generated almost \$600 million in revenue in 2013. It is the second largest online “college” in the United States. Most of the tuition dollars for Liberty’s online students comes from financial aid programs operated by the federal government’s Department of Education, approximately \$350 million in 2015. Because it is technically a church-related non-profit institution, Liberty pays no taxes on its earnings. Falwell himself earns over \$900,000 a year for managing the business. His so-called college “teaches” students that the Earth is only a few thousand years old and that dinosaurs lived at the same time as people and encourages them to get concealed hand-gun permits so they can protect the country and their college against Islamic terrorists.

But is there a payoff for the graduates? Not according to Singer (2017), who reports,

A big part of the problem is that after receiving their quality Liberty education over 40 percent of Liberty graduates earn



less than \$25,000 per year when they finish college. Earnings-wise, a Liberty degree is worth about the same amount as a high school diploma.

The most dangerous Trump appointment of all was, in my estimation, that of Steve Bannon, the now terminated assistant to the president and chief strategist in the Donald Trump administration—and the West Wing’s former resident apocalypticist—and formerly the executive chair of the alt-Right Breitbart News, who has openly admitted to admiring Dick Cheney, Darth Vader, and Satan (Stahl 2016). Bannon brought to the White House a ghoulishly cultic and gangrenous *Gemeinschaft*, and, given his white nationalism, it would be difficult to fault anyone for harbouring lurking suspicions that he set up a Lebensborn clinic somewhere in the bowels of the White House, a place where Trump’s new master race can begin their breeding rituals on behalf of the biotruth of the new white ethnostate: whiteness is the closest you can get to godliness. Time to get out the measuring tape and check the pedigree of those Aryan-shaped craniums.

Bannon is a Catholic, and a perplexing Catholic at that. During a talk at a Vatican conference on poverty and wealth creation hosted by the Dignitatis Humanae Institute, Bannon surprisingly expressed disdain for various forms of capitalism he had identified. Bannon referenced four types of capitalism: state-sponsored capitalism, which he equates with Russia and China; “crony” capitalism, which he links to an establishment, neoliberal corporatism that acts against the interests of an open, free market; “the Ayn Rand or the Objectivist School of libertarian capitalism” that treats people solely as economic commodities (which he falsely attributes to Marxism, which is arrayed precisely *against* the commodification of human beings); and, finally, “enlightened” capitalism, grounded in the morality of Judeo-Christian belief and the value systems of Western culture (Feder 2016). Of these four versions of capitalism, all must be rejected except for the latter, “enlightened capitalism,” championed by Bannon.

Bannon vociferously decries the forces of secularization and seeks to embark on a Holy War against Islam. I am against crony capitalism and neoliberal capitalism, and I certainly understand the dangerous limitations of state capitalism (originally identified by Marxist humanist Raya Dunayevskaya). And as a Catholic myself, I certainly appreciate Christian belief and value systems. But I also know how dangerously they can be interpreted and employed, especially against those who have already been victimized by society and the state. Bannon, however, seems to self-righteously

release the irrational forces of hate as a form of sacred violence embodied in a new type of Anglo-American nationalism driven by a superannuated Christology. There is something about him that echoes a longing for the Nietzschean superman, and there is something Heideggerian about Bannon that recognizes that humanity's foundations are built upon sacred violence. The problem is not in the recognition of violence at the heart of civilization but Heidegger's moral response: he chooses to endorse this condition rather than oppose it. To oppose, in other words, the need to scapegoat and sacrifice the victim in order to solidify the culture. It would serve Bannon's Catholicism well if he were to read the work of René Girard and Gil Bailie on the founding role of mimetic victimage (Bailie 1995; Girard 1979).

One of Bannon's primary goals is to deconstruct the "administrative state," but his attempts at doing so are being undermined by what some critics have called the "deep state," a type of shadow government, about which Dwight Eisenhower warned the American people. Eisenhower referred to the deep state as the "military industrial complex," but it has extended its tentacles far and wide since Eisenhower's time. While Nancy Reagan relied upon her White House astrologer (from 1981 to 1988) to advise her husband in personal and political matters while they occupied the White House, Bannon is another kettle of fish entirely. Bannon religiously follows the pseudo-scientific interpretations of discredited amateur historians William Strauss and Neil Howe, who believe we are at the tail end of a historical cycle of American history,<sup>2</sup> during which time a hero/leader known as the Grey Champion, a messianic strongman figure, will emerge and prevent the United States and Judeo-Christian and Western civilization from destruction. If Trump agrees with Bannon's world view (and he certainly appears to have Trump's ear), and if Trump himself believes he is the Grey Champion (knowing Trump, that would not be very difficult to imagine), the Trump presidency could be on its way toward eventuating an apocalyptic and omnicidal battle with the forces of "radical Islam" and China. In 2016, Bannon made this comment to Reagan biographer Lee Edwards: "We're going to war in the South China Seas in the next five to 10 years, aren't we?" (Blumenthal 2017a). Although an impertinent isolationist, Bannon appears to possess enough influence to persuade Trump to engage in a march through history as ideologically ruthless and unrepentant as Sherman's "March to the Sea," the Nazi blitzkrieg bombing of Poland, or, more recently, the "shock and awe" tactics of General Schwarzkopf during the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The actions by which Trump has hollowed out his life until there was nothing left but a red tie and some expensive hair tint

have caused him to take up residence in one of the more fashionable ethical subdivisions (where your neighbour happens to be the Father of Lies). They have also made him gravely susceptible to conspiracy addicts like Bannon and less likely to respond to cries of dereliction from those families bestirred by a system of brutal austerity capitalism who have suffered a dramatic loss of income since the Great Recession, while watching the earnings of the higher-income families rise.

Bannon has repeatedly referred to a racist French novel from the 1970s, *The Camp of the Saints*, by Jean Raspail, to explain his world view. The book—once praised by William F. Buckley Jr.—describes the takeover of France and the West by so-called Third World immigrants, leading to the destruction of Western civilization. Consider these anti-immigrant remarks Bannon has made over the past several years:

“It’s been almost a Camp of the Saints-type invasion into Central and then Western and Northern Europe,” he said in October 2015.

“The whole thing in Europe is all about immigration,” he said in January 2016. “It’s a global issue today—this kind of global Camp of the Saints.”

“It’s not a migration,” he said later than January. “It’s really an invasion. I call it the Camp of the Saints.”

“When we first started talking about this a year ago,” he said in April 2016, “we called it the Camp of the Saints.... I mean, this is Camp of the Saints, isn’t it?” (Blumenthal 2017b)

Of course, Steve Bannon is not the only Republican politician that is a fan of *The Camp of the Saints*. Iowa Representative Steve King concluded a radio interview in March 2017, recommending to listeners that they read *The Camp of the Saints* (Massie 2017). On the same program, he also responded to reports that whites would become a majority-minority demographic in the United States by 2044 by predicting that Blacks and Hispanics “will be fighting each other” before overtaking whites in the U.S. population (Massie 2017). Only a day earlier, he tweeted, “We can’t restore our civilization with somebody else’s babies,” a comment that was praised by white nationalist and former KKK grand wizard, David Duke, and condemned as “racist” by civil rights icon, Representative John Lewis (Massie 2017). King exhorted white Americans to invest in “our stock, our country, our culture, our civilization,” arguing that “we need to have enough babies to replace ourselves” (Massie 2017). That sounds like it came right out of the Bannon playbook.

In 2013, Bannon praised former Senator Joe McCarthy, of “McCarthyism” fame, and compared communist infiltration of America during the Cold War to a “dramatic influence campaign” by the Muslim Brotherhood in today’s Washington, DC (Massie and Kaczynski 2017). He notes that there is only one difference separating those two forms of infiltration. According to Bannon,

It’s the banks, it’s the investment banks, it’s the hedge funds, it’s the private equity funds, it’s the law firms, it’s the power establishment, in the United States, [that are] inextricably linked with the cash coming out of the Middle East.... There are voices there of rationality that are being mocked and derided every day and the reason that the establishment looks the other way and the Bush apparatus looks the other way is because there’s so much cash, there are so many petro-dollars being funneled back to this town. (Massie and Kaczynski 2017)

As influential as Bannon appears to be in peddling his extreme views, he’s no match for the “deep state.” According to Gary Olson (2017), the deep state is

a hybrid network of structures within which actual power resides. It includes the military-industrial complex, Wall Street, hordes of private contractors whose sole client is the government, national security agencies, select (not all) members of the State, Defense, CIA, Homeland Security, a few key members of the Congressional Defense and Intelligence Committees, and so on. Except for a handful of Congresspersons, Deep State members have not been elected and are accountable to no one. They profoundly influence virtually every domestic and foreign matter of consequence. D. J. Hopkins, another close student of this phenomenon, notes that “the system served by the Deep State is not the United States of America, i.e., the country most Americans believe they live in; the system it serves is globalized Capitalism.” And they do so regardless of which party is nominally in control. Lofgren takes pains to point out that the Deep State is *not* a coven of diabolical conspirators. It has evolved over several decades to become the antithesis of democracy.

The deep state is set against the economic nationalism of Bannon, and its goal is to ensure that the United States remains the major consolidating

force in the growth of the transnational capitalist class. In addition, the deep state will profit mightily from a new Cold War with Russia, especially the Pentagon and its arms dealers, and Trump and Bannon are not to be trusted; they may even “unwittingly expose their ‘marionette theater’ of contrived democracy” (Olson 2017). It is too early to tell how this drama between the deep state and Bannon will play out.

Another extremely dangerous Trump appointee was Sebastian Lukacs Gorka, also now terminated, a Hungarian immigrant and former deputy assistant to the president. A former national security affairs editor for the alt-Right news agency, Breitbart, Gorka has been a guest on the *Secure Freedom* radio show hosted by Frank Gaffney Jr., a fringe figure who touts the view that Islam and the West represent a fundamental clash of civilizations, and that we are currently at war with a global jihadist movement that interprets certain Koranic passages to support its acts of terror.

Until recently, Gorka himself was a fringe figure but now has found a place in the Trump administration, warmongering and bashing what he calls “Islamic laws of war” and arguing that the Koran’s violent passages are the cause for terrorism (Jaffe 2017). He has also made the claim that President Obama’s withdrawal of troops from Iraq is to blame for the rise of ISIS and that Trump’s attacks on radical Islamic terrorism will have no impact on ISIS recruitment.

According to Kurt Eichenwald (2016), right-wing extremists are a greater threat to the United States than ISIS. He writes that, since 2002, right-wing militants

have killed more people in the United States than jihadis have. In that time, according to New America, a Washington think tank, Islamists launched nine attacks that murdered 45, while the right-wing extremists struck 18 times, leaving 48 dead. These Americans thrive on hate and conspiracy theories, many fed to them by politicians and commentators who blithely blather about government concentration camps and impending martial law and plans to seize guns and other dystopian gibberish, apparently unaware there are people listening who don’t know it’s all lies. These extremists turn to violence—against minorities, non-Christians, abortion providers, government officials—in what they believe is a fight to save America. And that potential for violence is escalating every day.

Is it so surprising that Trump is downplaying right-wing terrorism from white supremacists at the same time as emphasizing the threat from what he calls “radical Islamic extremism”? Boehlert (2017) writes,

Coming in the wake of Trump’s controversial decision to sign an executive order temporarily barring individuals from seven majority-Muslim countries from entering the United States, Reuters this week reported that the Trump administration would direct a government-run program called Countering Violent Extremism to change its name to Countering Islamic Extremism or Countering Radical Islamic Extremism. In doing so, the program “would no longer target groups such as white supremacists who have also carried out bombings and shootings in the United States.” (The FBI and the Justice Department will still track hate crimes and prosecute homegrown terrorists.) Downgrading the scrutiny given to right-wing radicals has long been a goal of conservative media in America. Now Trump is moving to turn that desire into policy.

The unbridled love showered on Trump by his (really a faux-populism) oleaginous surrogates and followers, who have illicitly consecrated him as the chosen saviour of the country, gushes in direct proportion to Trump’s repellent hyperbolic populism and disdain for undocumented immigrants. With the enlivened faces of Trump’s venerators shining like Christmas tinsel, they crane their necks at Trump rallies like a possessed Linda Blair in *The Exorcist* in order to catch a glimpse of their ruddy white redeemer as he ascends the stage, arms pumping in patriotic ribaldry. A chilling spectacle of righteous vengeance begins to unfold as Trump begins his attack on the media, which could become the dry tinder for his eventual downfall. His loyal base screech and holler, “lock her up!” (referring to Hillary Clinton) as the social contagion at Trump rallies often turns pathological, leading to violence against protestors. Yet, for his adversaries, Trump’s hectoring, haranguing, and impertinent tone have been as suffocating as an hourglass corset with whalebone stays and has famously served as his signature marker (along with his red cap) since the beginning of his campaign. His endless bantering about the destruction visited upon his country by the guardians of political correctness, his pseudo-explanations of what he perceives as the enforced egalitarianism of the Left, his plans for a deportation task force to expel undocumented immigrants, and his paranoid accounting for the vulnerability of the United

States to terrorist attacks have been perceived by many as an incentive to violence, likening Trump to an impertinent catechist of the alt-Right. His podium delivery, with its onrush of acrimony, his exhortations to division and hatred, and his spiteful descriptions of Mexicans, Muslims, women, and the disabled, is as cheap as saloon and dance hall makeup. The hucksterish face of patriotism he wears in front of rapturous crowds is slathered in steady spurts of bile and smeared over the television screens that rarely seem absent of his grim visage for very long. What draws his base together is not something they all share but something they all lack—an incapability of rapprochement between justice and compassion.

The reason that an individual as odious as Trump has been able to insinuate himself so seamlessly and ineluctably into the political system in such a short time is because he *represents* the white supremacist/capitalist/patriarchal unconscious unchained. No matter how fashionable his apostasy, no ideologue of the ilk of a Donald Trump has the ability to free us from the current political system. There will be no apocalyptic fulfillment from the likes of Trump, despite his own media-minded hucksterism and steady pronouncements by the long list of hierophantic agents from Fox News (mostly retired generals, talk show hosts, or scandal-ridden politicians). Despite his irrepressible need for media attention and tweet attacks on Republican backsliders, he remains locked in a parochialism and defensive obstinacy that works to get him through the day. Mainstream ideologues on the Right or the Left are capable only of moulding us more snugly into whatever form is taken by the political ideology of the day, such as today's current incarnation of neoliberalism. And this is equally as true for Hillary Clinton, the cosmopolitan darling of the Dom Pérignon liberals whose speeches are commendably cleansed of Trump-style toxicity and to whom immigrants appear decidedly less craven and pitiable. To her credit, she has skilfully succeeded in anathematizing Trump as a white supremacist in an Italian silk suit. This is not to discount the fact that most of Trump's supporters are not (as often assumed) from the white working class—although there are many workers who have pledged him their unyielding allegiance—but from higher-income earners in the petty-bourgeois class (Hudis 2016). Racial and ethnic animosity, the fear of empowered Blacks, feminists, and gays and lesbians, and resentment of social change is in no way limited to working-class, disenfranchised whites.

Whether the capitalist system seems rudderless, oarless, and without sail, or orchestrated by a baleful cabal of bankers in the death clutch of the Illuminati, weary-eyed from devouring library shelves of well-thumbed alchemical texts, we need to examine the capitalist system itself to uncover



its internal relations (see Allman, McLaren, and Rikowski 2003). Whether the face of capitalism is Clinton swaddled in her \$12,000 Armani jacket, or a churlish Trump flaunting his \$5,000 Brioni suit fashioned for today's corporate overman, or even a naked, penitent hermit navel-gazing atop a state capital flagpole, we need to remember that any face of the capitalist system is only a face and is meant to distract us from the systemic workings of that system. The educational system is no exception.

The very places where you might expect to find some exemption from this madness—public universities—have become the most vulnerable. For example, Marc Spooner (2015, 5) describes university life as festering in the belly of an “audit culture,” where the fabled philosophical struggle for determining what constitutes “the good life” is now disturbingly “mak[ing] its appearance in the banal metrics of a standardized bookkeeping program.” The businessification, corporatization, and politically domesticating aspects of the neo-liberal university have precipitated schismatic ranks who have withdrawn their submission to search for the meaning of truth and justice in favour of settling for the demands of the corporate bottom line. Such tarnished faith in the ancient idea of *paideia* has been compounded by an even more vicious blasphemy: the ascendancy of the idea that universities, in order to survive, must function mainly as entrepreneurial workshops that educate new cadres of the ruling class while providing some compensation to those who are anguishing to join their ranks. After all, over the next twenty-five years, 47 per cent of existing jobs will be automated out of existence (Hudis 2016), and I am not optimistic that the technological revolution will find a way to replace them. People of colour who are disproportionately thrust out of any participation in the neoliberal economy face the prospect of complete dehumanization once they are out of work; whites who are pushed out of employment in a white supremacist society desperately cling to their identity as white people as some compensation for their dehumanization. And those who choose to resist, such as the warriors of Black Lives Matter or Idle No More, are branded as terrorists and face being dragged into social compliance by the long arm of the surveillance state. Clearly, the idea of socialist revolution has disappeared from the cultural patrimony of our post-enlightenment intellectual establishment, although it is possible that, given enough time, young people attracted to the Sanders campaign could build a movement strong enough one day to force the establishment's hand.

One of the most discouraging and incontrovertible truths of today is that dead labour continues to dominate living labour. The dual character of labour, according to Marx, drives the logic of capital. Abstract labour is



created through the instrumentality of socially necessary labour time, so that the value of a commodity is not based on the actual amount of labour it takes to produce it but on the average amount of time that is necessary to produce it on a world market, so that the relative proportion of living to dead labour (capital) progressively declines in today's system of wage labour, in which profit (value) augmented by investment in labour-saving devices creates greater profits in less time (Hudis 2016).

Abstract labour is indifferent to the needs of the worker in the sense that there is no finite limit to the drive to obey the imperatives of socially necessary labour time as workers are forced to produce more in a shorter amount of time, a situation that leads inexorably to the exploitation of natural resources, which, contrary to the infinite magnitude of value production, are necessarily finite (Hudis 2016). Do we think universities can escape this logic, especially at a time when the wage form of capital has been extended to hundreds of millions of people worldwide as capitalism colonizes the entire lifeworld of the planet? And when capitalism has reached the point of a conditioned universality, leaving the vast population of the planet ensepulchred within a neofeudal capitalist state? Marc Lamont Hill (2016, 173) writes,

When the only real money is being made on property rather than from hourly and salaried income, what solidarity does the capitalist have with the wage earner? When cheap foreign workers and technological advancements lead to sustained or even greater productivity, what reason is there to care about the worker who has been abandoned by it all?

The social universe in which we live—which has been constituted by a hyper-globalized system whose aim is not to generate material wealth or to satisfy use-value but rather to augment exchange value—is becoming increasingly unbraided; social bonds that were once part of the common storehouse of humanization are fraying as the subjectivity of workers is becoming effaced to the point of total elimination. Capitalism's inbuilt instability—its most recent incarnation manifested in the stillborn recovery of 2008—will intensify dramatically over the next several decades, as climate disaster, rising unemployment, stagnating living standards, increasing personal surveillance of the poor and powerless, and the squandering of natural resources and life-threatening pollution transform our global habitat such that it resembles a future crisis-ridden world not unlike contemporary dystopian landscapes, such as those found in films such as *Elysium*.

Trump's attacks on China's economic policies could lead to tensions within the global economy that could lead to war. William Robinson (2017) and others have written extensively on how the capitalist system "faces a structural crisis of extreme inequality and overaccumulation, as well as a political crisis of legitimacy and an ecological crisis of sustainability." Marxist and progressive educators have been writing about this crisis for decades. But Robinson (2017) notes another aspect to this crisis that could very well lead to "world conflagration," and this has to do with the "disjuncture between a globalizing economy and a nation-state system of political authority" that "threatens to undermine the system's ability to manage the crisis." And this disjuncture, notes Robinson, is at the heart of Trump's attacks on China's economic policies. Today's global economy has fully integrated numerous countries and power blocs such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and other countries in the Global South. Just think for a moment of the myriad of ways in which the global economy is dependent upon China, especially in relation to its role in subcontracting and outsourcing and the role its market continues to play in keeping capitalism afloat. Not only does it remain "the workshop of the world" but it leads the way in foreign direct investment. As Robinson (2017) points out, "Between 1991 and 2003, China's foreign direct investment increased 10-fold, and then increased 13.7 times from 2004 to 2013, from \$45 billion to \$613 billion." Robinson (2017) is essentially correct when he argues that we need "more balanced transnational state institutions that reflect the new realities of a multipolar and interdependent global capitalist system that could deescalate mounting international tensions and the threat of war," and ideally this would lead to a more "interventionist capitalist state."

At the same time, Robinson harbours no illusions that this is enough. We need mass social movements and a massive redistribution downward of wealth and power. But, absent such a revolution from below, it is clear we need more effective transnational state apparatuses of governance to resolve the disjuncture between a globalizing economy and a nation-state-based system of political authority. For example, Robinson (2017) notes, "The World Economic Forum has called for new forms of global corporate rule, including a proposal to remake the United Nations system into a hybrid corporate-government entity run by TNC [transnational corporate] executives in 'partnership' with governments." China is ahead of the United States in this regard, since

Chinese capitalism has not followed the neo-liberal route to global capitalist integration. The state retains a key role in the

financial system, in regulating private capital, and in planning. This allows it to develop 21st century infrastructure and to guide capital accumulation into aims broader than that of immediate profit making, something that Western capitalist states cannot accomplish due to the rollback of public sectors, privatization, and deregulation. (Robinson 2017)

When Trump attacks China, how seriously is he taking into account the fact that global capitalism is in severe crisis? To what extent does he have a critical understanding of China's role in the global economy? Is he, for instance, considering the fact that foreign direct investment between the United States and China has increased exponentially over the past several decades? According to Robinson (2017), in 2015, "more than 1,300 U.S.-based companies had investments of \$228 billion in China, while Chinese companies invested \$64 billion in the United States, up from close to zero just ten years earlier, and held \$153 billion in assets." Is Trump factoring in the reality that "the largest foreign holder of U.S. debt is China, which owns more than \$1.24 trillion in bills, notes, and bonds or about 30 percent of the over \$4 trillion in Treasury bills, notes, and bonds held by foreign countries," and that "China owns about 10 percent of publicly held U.S. debt" (Robinson 2017)? Robinson (2017) also points out that "deficit spending and debt-driven consumption has made the United States in recent decades the 'market of last resort,' helping to stave off greater stagnation and even collapse of the global economy by absorbing Chinese and world economic output." What would happen if China decided to withdraw billions of dollars in its investments in multiple industries in the United States? If the United States starts sabre-rattling with China, the entire world economy could be in peril, and the world would be at risk of nuclear annihilation.

The embattled stance of the academy to the crisis of capitalist overproduction has been to defend the privatization of the public sphere. This is no more evident than in attempts by universities to market themselves as a brand—that is, as a total experience. This could mean anything from living in a dorm that resembles a five-star hotel, to having the best fraternity and sorority houses in town, to having a group of Nobel laureates on faculty, to being connected to a student body that collectively shares certain religious and/or humanitarian beliefs.

A wide range of critical pedagogies over the last several decades has spiked the educational landscape, and even critical pedagogy itself has become a brand. While many of these "social justice" brands consist of domesticated,

denuded, and flatlined versions of Freirean pedagogy, others reflect a steadfast allegiance to Freire's important work, remaining loyal to critical pedagogy's historical aim: to critique and transform asymmetrical relations of power and privilege that constitute and are constituted by the surrounding milieu of the classroom; the school; the local, regional, and national aspects of the culture; and the institutional and economic arrangements of society. By "institutional and economic arrangements of society," I am referring to those systems of mediation that negatively impact the academic success of students, that rob counterfactual values of any cognitive validity, and, equally as important, rob students of their ability to think critically and to develop the kind of protagonist agency and predilection for the weak and powerless of human history necessary for a social revolution.

The germinating insight of critical pedagogy is that experience consists of actions in and on the world that can be mediated by critical reflection and thus become protagonistic in shaping the world in the interests of creating a better humanity. Critical consciousness can lead to an ethical obligation to end the needless suffering of the oppressed. It is perhaps more the case that an ethical obligation to assist the oppressed can lead to critical consciousness—since ethics should precede epistemology in the praxis of serving in a community, and not above it. Truth does not begin as a minor infraction against the cold machines of capitalist power with their exacerbated unleashing of deception and promise of universal salvation through the god of commerce, or as an impious indiscretion at a banquet table regaled in splendour for the rich, but as a rasping shout from the barricades! We must denounce social injustice in order to announce the coming of social justice. This is what Paulo Freire taught us in his charter document on critical pedagogy, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Drawing on research by Michael Burawoy, Spooner (2015) describes the university as a site where a scholar's worth is organized in a system dominated by public management technologies and accountancy practices underlain by a technocratic rationality and measured by restricting academic accomplishments to narrow and retrograde performance indicators and tabulating them by means of simple algorithms on a spreadsheet that includes such categories as peer-reviewed publications, journal impact rankings, and research grants. Researchers who collaborate in engaged public scholarship and community-based projects with the intention of contributing to the betterment of the commons are often, according to Spooner, marginalized, depersonalized, and driven to the sidelines, seriously jeopardizing their prospects for tenure. Remaining relentless catechizers while intervening in the lives of the oppressed is considered less legitimate within the neoliberal

academy than, say, documenting the theories and epistemological risks inherent in unspecified research protocols. In other words, the neoliberal academy and its clerisy wedded to the establishment of official channels and the principles of the new managerialism as rule creators, rule enforcers, and moral entrepreneurs trained for appropriate decisional responses have brutally cleaved dialectical engagement in two, deracinating its hermeneutical potential by focusing only on one half of what constitutes the dialectic of critical consciousness; such a brutal sundering of the potential for critical analysis is accomplished by validating theory as a discrete entity that should stand on its own, as somehow existing in antiseptic isolation from its dialectical companion: practice. This move not only prohibits any real critical and transformative engagement—any authentic praxis—to emerge from collaboration with living and breathing human beings but actually promotes a radical disjuncture with everyday life. Critical theorists are considered crackpot philosophical sectaries entangled in occult casuistries. This is the very opposite of how a university should function.

The “adjunctification” of universities—a major symptom of the corporatization of the university—and the fear of collective bargaining among administrations in public universities have intensified in recent years, threatening to fracture faculty-student relationships as adjunct graduate student workers attempt to unionize, sometimes against the recommendations of faculty. Yet Marley-Vincent Lindsey (2016) writes,

The truth is that graduate student unions have little to do with most faculty-student relationships; they instead threaten the very structure of power within bloated administrations that have restructured academic programs and services at personal gain.

He also notes,

Regardless of how we feel about it, survival in the academy has become a corporate exercise. Instead of looking at unions as the antithesis of academic life, we should consider them an assertion of the authority of those of us who carry out the labor that makes higher education possible. All of us will be better for it.

The question of unions becomes increasingly important as current estimates of nontenured faculty in U.S. universities are between 50 and 70 per cent, an increase of 30 per cent since 1975.

While blatant hate propaganda is not hard to find throughout college campuses in the United States, there has been a recent spike in more subtle versions of white supremacist discourse in sayings such as “Protect your heritage,” “Let’s become great again,” “Our future belongs to us,” “White people, do something,” and “Serve your people” (Ganim, Welch, and Meyersohn 2017). Recently, the Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that monitors hate crimes across the country, released its annual report on extremism.

The report says the number of groups across the country increased in 2016 to 917, up from 892 in 2015. In 2011, SPLC [Southern Poverty Law Center] recorded 1,018 active organizations, the highest tally it found in more than 30 years of tracking hate groups. That number had fallen to 784 in 2014. The largest jump last year occurred in the number of anti-Muslim hate groups, which tripled from 34 in 2015 to 101. The report singled out Donald Trump’s pledge to bar Muslims from entering the country, his harsh language around immigration from Mexico, his appearance on conspiracy-theorist Alex Jones’s radio program, and his engagement with white nationalists on Twitter as key moments that encouraged extremist groups during the campaign. (Ganim, Welch, and Meyersohn 2017)

White nationalism has received a boost from Trump’s presidential election campaign and from his first month in office, as efforts have been made by right-wing groups to normalize the idea that the United States is a country that has always belonged to Europeans and is under threat of being taken away from them by non-white immigrants. According to a recent CNN report, the message of these hate groups is making progress because of the way nationalism is being packaged as “identitarian”:

“They’re racist, but they have fancy new packaging,” said Brian Levin, director for the Center of Hate and Extremism at Cal State San Bernardino. “They learn to downplay the swastikas and get a thesaurus, so instead of white supremacy they use words like identitarian. It’s just a repackaged version of white nationalism.”

“Trump’s run for office electrified the radical right, which saw in him a champion of the idea that America is fundamentally a white man’s country,” wrote Mark Potok, a senior fellow at the SPLC. “Several new and energetic groups appeared last year that

were almost entirely focused on Trump and seemed to live off his candidacy.” “The country saw a resurgence of white nationalism that imperils the racial progress we’ve made, along with the rise of a president whose policies reflect the values of white nationalists,” Potok noted.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment. (Ganim, Welch, and Meyersohn 2017)

Today, the leafletting at campuses by white supremacists has received a linguistic facelift, but the message is still the same. They regard the “diversity” emphasis on campuses throughout the country as a cult designed to shut out white people from their inherited right to live in dominion over other races present on this country’s soil. This kind of message is at risk of becoming normalized, as students radicalized by this hate set up “watch lists” designed to purge campuses of pro-multiculturalist professors who they claim are anti-American.

If we want to understand how fascism takes hold of educational institutions, a good example would be the recent purge of academics and teachers from universities and high schools and elementary schools in Turkey after a failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, that the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan blamed on a religious group led by the cleric Fethullah Gülen. So far, 28,163 schoolteachers and 4,811 academics have been dismissed from their positions. Many educators have been publicly ridiculed and harassed, including friends and colleagues of mine. According to Eda Erdener (2017),

Professor Bülent Ari, a member of the supervisory board of the Council of Higher Education, or YÖK, recently said: “The growing number of educated people has exasperated me...We need an ignorant generation for the future of the country. Those who have harmed the country are those who have been well educated. Those who will save this country are people who have not even graduated from primary school. We trust them for the new Turkey.” This was not an ironic comment. Will our students be taught by those with similar views?

Professor Ari’s statement reminds me of the attitude of the famous American journalist and political commentator, Walter Lippmann, who described the vast array of ordinary Americans unworthy of thinking and planning in a democracy as the “bewildered herd.” Erdener (2017) also reports,



During peaceful protest against this action, professors were beaten and dragged along the ground by police officers. The police officers, who are around 20 years old and whose education background is unknown, not only physically beat academics—including veteran professors—but humiliated them.

On a visit to Ankara, Turkey, to support critical educators in 2011, I was tear-gassed, trampled upon, and chased through the streets by riot police. Fortunately, I was spotted by a waiter who dragged me into his restaurant, where I was hidden for several hours until the riot police left the area. This was not my first international experience with riot police and clearly it represented fascism in the making, and it is not out of the question that similar conditions could obtain here in the United States, especially under a Trump administration where the president works in witless complicity with the ideas of a Bannon or a Gorka, such that anyone critical of the current administration (such as the so-called fake news mainstream media outlets cited recently by Trump, CNN, ABC, NBC, CBS) could be labelled “an enemy of the American people.”

This attitude reminds me of the year 2006, when I was placed on the top of a list of dangerous UCLA professors known as the “dirty thirty,” where the right-wing group orchestrating the attack (with the backing of some Republican Party funders) offered to pay students \$100 to audiotape our lectures and \$50 for their lecture notes. That was the year the FBI was investigating university libraries to see who was checking out what was considered subversive literature.

Speaking of “fake news,” Julian Assange recently reported that he was happy about fake news, claiming it represents the direct opposition of the unvarnished and pristine releases by WikiLeaks. Contrasting WikiLeaks with “fake news,” Assange asserts that by “uncovering government and corporate conduct,” WikiLeaks is “not just another damn story, it’s not just another damn journalist putting their damn byline, advertising themselves and their position on another damn story” (Reilly 2017). Assange argues that because newspapers publish nothing more than “weaponised text that is designed to affect a person just like you,” written by journalists that act as little more than “opportunistic snipers,” he is more than happy with the advent of “fake news,” which he believes makes a stronger case for WikiLeaks. He argues that WikiLeaks deals in “pre-weaponized information” that, unlike “fake news,” can be wholly trusted. However, the question remains, how do organizations like WikiLeaks—what Assange calls a “rebel library of Alexandria”—choose



to release their information? That is why there is still much controversy surrounding a WikiLeaks publication—just a month prior to Election Day—of thousands of hacked emails allegedly from Clinton campaign chairman, John Podesta, including full transcripts of Clinton’s controversial speeches to Goldman Sachs and other Wall Street firms. It released those transcripts less than a month before Election Day. Does the careful timing of WikiLeaks’ releases not transform its information into weapons-grade material? Not according to WikiLeaks. Staff members at WikiLeaks have described their editorial policy as follows:

We have an editorial policy to publish only information that we have validated as true and that is important to the political, diplomatic or historical.... We believe in transparency for the powerful and privacy for the rest. We publish in full in an uncensored and uncensorable fashion... We are not risk-averse and will continue to publish fearlessly. (Collins 2016)

Assange does admit, however, that WikiLeaks is in the business of scandal making when he remarks, “But the library has to be marketed. And so the scandal-generation business, which we’re also in—I view that as a kind of marketing effort for what is much more substantial, which is our archive” (Reilly 2017). We must keep in mind that Julian Assange has come under increasing scrutiny for his correspondence with Trump’s election team officials and that Trump, Assange, (Nigel) Farage, and Bannon have been accused of being clandestinely linked together like some confusing, unorientable Möbius band.

If WikiLeaks brands itself as pre-weaponized, anti-fake news, what exactly is meant by the term “fake news”? Clearly, the Trump administration’s casuistry about the existence of “alternative facts” has attacked the very credibility of what it means for something to be true, reducing all facts to opinions. The Trump administration has been caught solemnly sanctioning ignorance and making delusion the basis of cultural literacy by rejiggering facts to suit its own base, eviscerating the veridical basis of the facts themselves and reducing them to opinions. This makes “hearsay” into an irrepressible cultural force, eroding the very principles of rational deliberation. This has weighty implications for our cultural commons. When rational argumentation collapses, any opinion that enflames the mind can thus be treated as an “alternative fact” and can influence young people to order their lives around judgmental relativism, releasing their pent-up rage by allying themselves with subcultures of hate, such as white nationalist movements

and their fervent incantations surrounding the defence of the white race. Dylann Roof is but one example. While it may be true that what was once held as an incontrovertible and immutable fact—such as the notion that the earth is flat—has over time been proven to be false, there are some facts that can be proven by relatively simple means, such as whether the crowd size at Trump’s inauguration was larger than the crowd that was present for Obama’s inauguration, or whether thousands of Massachusetts residents travelled to New Hampshire to vote illegally for Hillary Clinton. Or whether children die from asthma resulting from air pollution, or from drinking water laced with contaminants dumped by coal-fired factories.

Sabrina Tavernise (2016) of the *New York Times* defines “fake news” as follows: “Narrowly defined, ‘fake news’ means a made-up story with an intention to deceive, often geared toward getting clicks.” Andrew Selepak (2017), a professor of telecommunications at the University of Florida who provides resources for educators in becoming more critically literate about fake news, expands the definition:

Fake news can be hoax websites like *The Onion*. Fake news can come from “news outlets” like *RT News*, the first Russian 24/7 English-language news channel formerly known as “Russian Today” and produces stories with approval from the Russian Government. Fake news can be supermarket tabloids like *The Globe*. Fake news can be blogs and websites that look like news sites but are opinion sites created to disseminate one side of a story under the appearance of truth—these sites can lean Right or Left. Fake news can be purposely fictitious disinformation created to deceive an audience for political or financial gain, or for the hollow satisfaction of misinforming readers.

Some say fake news can even be pundit and political talk shows that present one side of a story rather than the full truth such as *Rush Limbaugh* or the *Ed Schultz Show*.

Perhaps most significantly, fake news can be a tweet, a post, or a meme that is shared on the Internet, and becomes accepted as true by those who don’t investigate the story further before sharing it with others and thus perpetuating the cycle of fake news.

Fake news sites and some social media accounts deliberately publish hoaxes, propaganda, and disinformation to drive web traffic promoted through social media either to generate ad revenue as a form of clickbait or to spread disinformation.

There are some basic and common sense questions that need to be raised when confronting possible “fake news” and “alternative facts.” First and foremost, we need to interrogate our own biases and those of our friends, our colleagues, and our family, and understand the ideological frameworks that have shaped and currently shape our thinking and cause us to select certain information over others. We need to acquire the tools of critical media literacy. For instance, is it still meaningful today to repeat Annette Michelson’s (1979) adage, that in the age of advertising, “You are the end product delivered en masse to the advertiser” (quoted in Malmgren 2017)? Or do we need to revise that adage in light of today’s digital communications and say that your *data* is the end production rather than yourself (Malmgren 2017)? Are we, in other words, learning to labour for free in the service of Big Data? There are other more technical questions that come to the fore: How does learning on screens differ from learning on paper? In other words, how do they differ in fashioning the reflective self? How do they differ in the production of knowledge from audio-visual media? With the rise of e-books and the death of print media, how does this affect the structures of mediation that inform our ideologically coded selves, especially when the process of reading from computer screens and tablets involves hyperlinks, complicated layouts, and touch screen involvement? How do specific technological developments affect memory, recall, and perception, from the days in which we used to store our artificial memory as stacks of newspaper clippings? How is cognitive capitalism affecting the way we learn and perform our identities in today’s cybercultures and other cultural offshoots created by digital technologies? How will digital culture affect the recomposition of the working class? In a recent article in the *New York Times Magazine*, Barbara Ehrenreich (2017) offers a good description of today’s working class:

Now when politicians invoke “the working class,” they are likely to gesture, anachronistically, to an abandoned factory. They might more accurately use a hospital or a fast-food restaurant as a prop. The new working class contains many of the traditional blue-collar occupations—truck driver, electrician, plumber—but by and large its members are more likely to wield mops than hammers, and bedpans rather than trowels. Demographically, too, the working class has evolved from the heavily white male grouping that used to assemble at my house in the 1980s; black and Hispanic people have long been a big, if unacknowledged, part of the working class, and now it’s more female and contains

many more immigrants as well. If the stereotype of the old working class was a man in a hard hat, the new one is better represented as a woman chanting, “El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!” (The people united will never be defeated!)

If Ehrenreich’s description of the working class is accurate, how will today’s shift to “cognitive capitalism” contribute to the well-being of its members? First, we must get a grasp of what is meant by this term. Mike Peters (in press) explains:

Cognitive capitalism is now a huge new development that has grown rapidly concerning the cultural-cognitive sectors of high-tech, finance, media, education, and the cultural industries characterized by digital technologies and associated with the “knowledge economy,” the “learning economy,” “post-Fordism” and the increasing flexibility of labor markets. The hypothesis of cognitive capitalism (CC) suggests we are entering a third phase of capitalism, following mercantile and industrial phases, where the accumulation is centered on immaterial assets. CC emphasizes the accumulation of immaterial information-based assets protected through the global regime of intellectual property rights to ensure the conditions for a digital scalability that appropriates and profits from the information commons allowing the creation of surplus value from monopolistic rents. Digital reading, along with digital learning, is absolutely core to the knowledge economy—these skills are its necessary points of entry. Labor flexibilization ensures 24/7 Net activity that is put in the service of a new kind of reading. This is not meditative or immersive reading for the pleasure of the text. Rather, it is a kind of pervasive industriousness attuned to forms of *networking* and brain activity that requires continuous training, skills and attention. The connection here between digital knowledge economy, neuroscience, and the psychology of learning is very close as labor processes are moved from traditional hierarchical Tayloristic forms to new network forms that exploit relational, affective and cognitive faculties.

“Cognitive capitalism” is a term being frequently used in today’s academy, and it is linked to the concept of the knowledge economy. In this new era of job flexibilization and the knowledge economy, we are told that we

constantly need to upgrade our skills as jobs are replaced by those that require more sophisticated retraining programs in digital technology. But rather than using the term “knowledge economy,” would it not be easier and perhaps even more accurate to use the term, “low-wage economy”? Barbara Ehrenreich (2017) writes,

The other popular solution to the crisis of the working class was job retraining. If ours is a “knowledge economy”—which sounds so much better than a “low-wage economy”—unemployed workers would just have to get their game on and upgrade to more useful skills. President Obama promoted job retraining, as did Hillary Clinton as a presidential candidate, along with many Republicans. The problem was that no one was sure what to train people in; computer skills were in vogue in the ’90s, welding has gone in and out of style and careers in the still-growing health sector are supposed to be the best bets now. Nor is there any clear measure of the effectiveness of existing retraining programs. In 2011, the Government Accountability Office found the federal government supporting 47 job-training projects as of 2009, of which only five had been evaluated in the previous five years. Paul Ryan has repeatedly praised a program in his hometown, Janesville, Wis., but a 2012 ProPublica study found that laid-off people who went through it were less likely to find jobs than those who did not.

Part of Trump’s appeal was to promise to bring back the very same jobs the working class had lost, rather than being retrained, as Clinton had suggested, and this was by far the more popular option. Again, Ehrenreich (2017) writes,

No matter how good the retraining program, the idea that people should be endlessly malleable and ready to recreate themselves to accommodate every change in the job market is probably not realistic and certainly not respectful of existing skills. In the early ’90s, I had dinner at a Pizza Hut with a laid-off miner in Butte, Mont. (actually, there are no other kinds of miners in Butte). He was in his 50s, and he chuckled when he told me that he was being advised to get a degree in nursing. I couldn’t help laughing too—not at the gender incongruity but at the notion

that a man whose tools had been a pickax and dynamite should now so radically change his relation to the world. No wonder that when blue-collar workers were given the choice between job retraining, as proffered by Clinton, and somehow, miraculously, bringing their old jobs back, as proposed by Trump, they went for the latter.

If the old jobs are not coming back, there is a better way to address the current crisis of capitalism. Raise the minimum wage! Create a living wage! Ehrenreich (2017) is right on the mark:

The old jobs aren't coming back, but there is another way to address the crisis brought about by deindustrialization: Pay all workers better. The big labor innovation of the 21st century has been campaigns seeking to raise local or state minimum wages. Activists have succeeded in passing living-wage laws in more than a hundred counties and municipalities since 1994 by appealing to a simple sense of justice: Why should someone work full time, year-round, and not make enough to pay for rent and other basics? Surveys found large majorities favoring an increase in the minimum wage; college students, church members and unions rallied to local campaigns. Unions started taking on formerly neglected constituencies like janitors, home health aides and day laborers. And where the unions have faltered, entirely new kinds of organizations sprang up: associations sometimes backed by unions and sometimes by philanthropic foundations—Our Walmart, the National Domestic Workers Alliance and the Restaurant Opportunities Centers United.

The answer to all of these questions begins, in my view, with an ethical commitment. Any critical pedagogy worth its salt begins with practice born out of a moral commitment to take down all suffering human beings from the cross (McLaren 2015). Following in the tradition of liberation theology and Catholic social teaching, I refer to this as a preferential obligation that we have to our brothers and sisters who share this planet with us yet who continue to suffer under dehumanizing conditions. Some advocates of critical pedagogy have maintained that critical consciousness must be achieved before one is able to make the necessary decisions in working with oppressed groups. However, critical consciousness is not a precondition for

acting in and on the world in a transformative manner; it is not a stipulation that must hold in all situations before working with oppressed groups in various capacities and circumstances. Far from serving as a precondition for doing transformative work with communities, critical consciousness is the outcome of working ethically in theoretically informed ways with communities (both virtual and real), both inside and outside of university settings. Years ago, it was Paulo Freire and Chavista activists in Venezuela who taught me the importance of orthopraxis over orthodoxy, that is, the necessity of understanding praxis as the foundation and bellwether of theory. In this instance, crystal theoretical clarity is not necessary before we engage in an active living commitment to the poorest and most marginalized in society. We must live our politics in fidelity with our obligation to help marginalized and oppressed communities before we can arrive at a correct or orthodox understanding of critical theory. That does not mean that theoretical understanding is unimportant. Far from it. Being informed by relevant critical theories admittedly is very crucial in social justice education as these theories can help to refine and fine-tune concrete practices of intervening in the world rather than simply positioning us as passive observers trained only to transpose reality onto a factory foreman's ledger and judge it on the basis of inputs and outputs. But to restrict our theories to or value them mainly for their sumptuous appearance in high-status journals is to reduce the role of the educator to that of an academic.

We are not solely academics—we are teacher activists who persist in our work on behalf of others; we have chosen our profession in order to transform the world through activities bounded by the principles, ethical imperatives, and practices of social justice. Unfortunately, many academics are not concerned if their roles as educators reproduce the very objects of their criticism. On the other hand, those who view their work in the academy more as a political project than an academic career and who fight to redeem the human subject in its totality by struggling for its liberation from capital and the antagonisms entangled with it—racism, sexism, homophobia, and the asymmetrical relations of privilege wrought by the colonality of power—face the consequences of working in academic environments that find such work either increasingly irrelevant or annoyingly unhinged from their corporate mission.

Social science researchers do not escape the mystifying sway of the big “isms”—capitalism, imperialism, militarism, consumerism, pharmaceuticalism, utilitarianism, nationalism, white supremacism—that underlay our cognitive plutocracy in a common Western belief system known as



materialism. Many educational researchers are free-range materialists who share the view that everything in the world supervenes on the physical. And while materialism is not a bad thing in itself (my own Marxist analysis is framed by historical materialist research), often its adherents are unable to give due discernment to, and thereby invalidate and diminish, the cosmologies and world views of non-Western colonized peoples, even on occasion pouring ridicule on them. I am not endorsing here a type of educational docetism based on coteries congealed around an affinity for a certain subject matter. I am merely highlighting the perils of fetishizing that which can be so intractably trapped within a carnal envelope that its adherents remain irrepressibly uncharitable to anyone who does not view the world as a set of unassailable physical facts. Their position would make more sense to researchers whose chosen scientific heartland is the laboratory and who can be found labouring under a poster of the periodic table and collecting data with nitrile gloves, Erlenmeyer and volumetric flasks, Bunsen burners, graduated cylinders, and with maybe a Jacob's Ladder thrown in to impress onlookers. But educational researchers do not sediment their habits on computer screens, they work with and among people—often with populations who hail from different continents with different belief systems. We cannot remain so ontologically closed-minded, instrumental, and calculative that our philosophical doctrines get in the way of our praxis. Reason skids on slippery ideas by banishing feuding facts. Remaining open-minded and using culturally responsive approaches in our research cannot be overemphasized.

Another pressing task for critical educators is to encourage colleagues to challenge what is too often perceived among mainstream researchers as proscribed domains of discourse (such as participatory action research) and to agitate on behalf of their students, as well as other groups. Too often educational researchers refuse to take an adversarial stance against capitalism, racism, sexism, and homophobia, and likewise are not comfortable making a generic ethical commitment to the oppressed in their own work, hiding behind the “false solemnity” of what they regard as “real science” and citing the principled evasion commonly known as “scientific objectivity” as their defence.

Many students facing higher tuition rates and dismal prospects for decent employment are sometimes less likely to want a critical education that more deeply nests them in oppositional environments. On many occasions, what they seek is a more pragmatic and instrumental return on their investment—a job with a secure future. This is not to say that students are less likely to join groups that foment opposition to the neoliberal state, as



the Sanders campaign (modelled less on Marx's concept of socialism than a watered-down version of European social democracy) tellingly brought to light, but that universities have now been so insinuated into the neoliberal corporatocracy and business models of leadership, with their increasing demands for a politics of economic austerity and debt generation, that they are now naturalized as part of the subsector of the economy. After all, economic inequality and insecurity are endemic to capitalism, and the embourgeoisement of the academy teaches its students that a university degree is perceived as one of the few remaining chances for economic advancement. The focus for too many of our students becomes getting prepared for the capitalist world rather than viewing university life as an opportunity to be part of the struggle to bring an alternative social universe into being.

*Dissident Knowledge in Higher Education*, edited by Marc Spooner and James McNinch, is unsparing in the way it reveals how the university system has become fully insinuated into the world ecology of human capital (Moore 2015a, 2015b), into the logic of neoliberal economics administered by means of a market metric macrophysics of power and set of governing tactics that submits everything in its path to a process of monetization and that simultaneously transforms everything and everyone within our social universe to a commodity form (Brown 2015). It accomplishes this task by avoiding false optimism and engendering a belief in the power of solidarity and struggle. Few books exist today that bring together such a powerful array of critical voices.

*Dissident Knowledge in Higher Education* includes an extraordinary group of scholar activists, some of the most highly acclaimed cultural workers worldwide who have over the decades provided pathfinding studies that have made possible and helped to legitimize the field of critical pedagogy and critical research methodology. Others are younger scholar activists who are beginning to lead the field with iconoclastic work driven by the imperatives of social justice and liberation. All of the contributors have produced profound ethnographic, philosophical, and theoretical work that has shattered—and continues to shatter—the boundaries of educational research. It is not surprising that the chapters are fearless in their approach, rigorous in their argumentation, and driven by a relentless search for justice. Questions pertaining to Indigeneity and Indigenous Knowledges, including cognitive democracy, epistemicide, the colonality of power, the politics of accountability, and resistance within and to the neoliberal academy are all shown to be implicated in the development of the broad underpinnings of an encompassing revolutionary critical pedagogy.

We need to address these questions urgently. Especially since recent research indicates that young people born between 1980 and 1994 are more polarized politically than Generation Xers and Baby Boomers, with Millennials more likely identifying as conservatives, compared to the 1980s (Howard 2016). In fact, 23 per cent of Millennials are identified as leaning to the far right (Howard 2016). We need to understand better how universities shape and are shaped by disciplinary regimes of power and privilege that often overshadow their critical role. Here I am referring to courses, programs, faculty hires, and tenure decisions that include criteria such as race, class, gender, disability, and LGBTQ issues. But we should also be concerned with how universities in our society contribute to the social reproduction of capitalism, with its entangled antagonisms such as racism, sexism, patriarchy, homophobia, white privilege, and the colonial imperatives of the white settler state. We need to ask: What is the source of our responsibility as public pedagogues and activists who reject the consumer model of education and, who, as agents and agitators of social change, view our role as cultural workers carrying out our decolonizing projects in spaces both inside and outside the university? How can we better understand the role played by universities in the production, circulation, and consumption of cognitive and informational capitalism? How is academic labour and productivity assessed in a setting where digital education and communication technologies are blurring the distinction between students' and professors' professional and personal lives in our "always on" culture? You cannot shut culture out, after all. It is always already there like an arthritic knee. What role do universities play today in advancing and legitimizing capitalist development? What role do they play in strengthening the military industrial complex and the development of cyber technologies used to control information, in creating ideological submission for the masses to particular political and cultural views, or in supporting research by biotech companies committed to creating weapons technologies used to increase the "kill ratio" of our military? How are faculty and students engaged in or prevented from making decisions about how university financial investments are made? Are decisions about student tuition costs and admissions arrived at collectively? How is value produced in the process of academic labour and how does this affect both permanent and adjunct faculty, as well as graduate assistants? How is freedom of speech protected in a world where social media is obliterating the distinction between public and private lives? These are only a few of the crucial questions that must be raised.

These questions are especially relevant at a time when inglorious documentaries, videos, books, and screeds of all stripes have gobsmacked even

those on the Left who have come to expect the most ludicrous conspiracy theories emanating from the Right. For the last twenty years, right-wing conspiracy theorists have been building their case against the Frankfurt School theorists, and this has resulted in a plethora of wing nuts peddling the lunacy of arch conservative ideologues who have gained the attention of the Tea Party and other groups, including white nationalists, libertarian Christian Reconstructionists, members of the Christian Coalition, the Free Congress Foundation, and neo-Nazi groups such as Stormfront. They maintain that blame for the cultural degradation and corruption of the United States can be placed at the feet of the Institute for Social Research, initially housed at the Goethe University in Frankfurt and relocated to Columbia University in New York during the rise of Hitler in 1935. Its illustrious members and associates include Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, Leo Löwenthal, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse. Peddlers of this crackpot theory include Michael Minnicino, Paul Weyrich, Pat Buchanan, Roger Kimball, and others. They maintain that these “cultural Marxists” (who, unsurprisingly, they are fond of mentioning are all Jewish) set out to destroy the cultural and moral fabric of U.S. society. But it is the fringe writings of William S. Lind, in particular, that have had the most chilling effect. In 2011, Lind’s writings inspired Norwegian neo-Nazi mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik to slaughter seventy-seven fellow Norwegians and injure 319 more. Lind and his ilk blame the Frankfurt School theorists for a litany of crimes, including the deindustrialization of America’s cities, neoliberal free trade policies, affirmative action, immigration, sexual liberation, gay marriage, multiculturalism, political correctness, the welfare state, and the privileging of the concerns of African Americans, feminists, and homosexuals over those of white citizens. Anyone familiar with critical pedagogy knows that the writings of the Frankfurt School are foundational to its theoretical framework. So, following the logic of Lind and that of his followers, critical educators are *de facto* promoting the destruction of the very fabric of U.S. society and culture. This gives new meaning to comments made by right-wing pundits such as Donald Trump and Steve Bannon, who are notorious for berating political correctness and feminism and for their toxic disdain toward African American groups such as Black Lives Matter. How will the university be able to counter these egregious theories that, if left unchecked, will only promote the proliferation of hate groups and the mass targeting of the leftist intellectuals?

I was fortunate to be a participant in the extraordinary symposium that gave birth to this book, an international event organized by Marc Spooner

and James McNinch. How Marc was able to succeed in bringing such a large and diverse group of scholar activists together under one roof was a question that percolated through the conference. Clearly, the consensus among the participants was that Marc is gifted with an ability to assemble communities of teachers and learners and to make change happen. Marc and James have together produced a text whose intellectual sediment will remain for generations to explore and use as a foundation for new forms of educational activism. This book is a testament to all of the participants' intrepid and unrelenting attempts to make a better world.

All of the contributors to this book emphasize the importance of solidarity and a commitment to those who needlessly suffer—the popular majorities—and I am confident that readers will join them in attempting to tear out by the roots the sources of their suffering. The suffering of the poor can never be the social price for capitalist “progress,” and, hence, we refuse to foreclose the future for the few but struggle to make the future for the many. Although we need not craft for critical pedagogy too flattering an unction, since critical pedagogy has always faced situations where agitation for social justice requires pitched battles with those in a much stronger position to adorn and enlighten future generations with the world-rectifying philosophy of capitalism, cunningly devised to discredit all alternatives to the value form of labour. Such battles imperil teachers who refuse to remain diffident and who are vulnerable to school and university officials. Yet we must continue to fight fascism and immiseration capitalism, since our position follows from the facts of economic inequality and civil rights injustices, refuses to remain politically neutral yet at the same time retains a commitment to remaining scientifically impartial in our research.

Part of the success of the Left has been in protesting existing regimes by speaking truth to power, yet part of its failure has been stopping short of promoting robust debate in the public square regarding the development of a viable idea of what might constitute the best alternative to capitalism (Hudis 2016). Without such a debate, we make the further degradation and exploitation of the oppressed all the easier and leave the argument in the hands of the educational patriciate. As part of the ranks of revolutionary educators, we are therefore committed to work in dialogical engagement with subaltern groups—not through polemics and rhetorical efforts alone—but rather in solidarity with other movements and activists to help develop a viable understanding of what a universe outside of the value form of capitalist production might look like and, in so doing, undertake purposive action in and on the world. I find the insights of Marx on the critique of political

economy and the struggle for socialism to be indispensable in this task, as well as the work being done by Indigenous scholars in the context of Las Americas, the Caribbean, Australasia, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere.

Readers may find their own inspiration from other sources. The point is that we are in this struggle together, and together we will move into a future with, to paraphrase Antonio Gramsci, a continued pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will.

The unedifying spectacle of neoliberal capitalism, into whose orbit the entire world is being drawn, is one that exhibits less and less empathy for its victims. Today's imprimatur for moral rectitude is the clenched white fist raised to a stiff salute, accompanied by a rousing rendition of "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" from the film *Cabaret*. Truth is suffered to exist in this populist climate only to the extent that it profits the rich and the powerful. Truth is truth only if it services the lordship of the ruling class. The moral gavel wielded like a tar brush and with impunity by the authoritarian populists and demagogues of the world against the very concept of democracy has solemnly sanctioned violence against immigrants, refugees, people of colour, and the most vulnerable among us. As part of the brutal delights of authoritarianism, it has turned them into scapegoats, propagating deception and sending chills throughout the bloodstained chambers of social justice. This book serves as a critical bulwark to such insanity, a recrudescing demand for civil rights, and a pedagogical revelation to be absorbed not only in order to reclaim the future but to remind all the yesterdays of the past that we are forever bound by memory and by hope. We, the people, are determined to follow the arc of social dreaming and its careening course toward liberation, and to build the infrastructure for living in a social universe free from the fetters of capitalism's value form, where our labour is freely associated and our creativity and humanity is nourished by love and compassion. This is a profound truth indeed. The future of humanity turns upon it. As democracy in the hands of those who would usurp our freedoms circles the drain, we shall renew our commitment to fight the power that is flushing our liberties into oblivion.

I would like to end with a reflection on past history. Following the success of the March on Washington and the passing of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, Martin Luther King and other members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) announced the Poor People's Campaign in Atlanta, Georgia, on December 4, 1967. After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King on April 4, 1968, the Poor People's Campaign, now led by Ralph Abernathy, constructed a makeshift encampment or shantytown, known as Resurrection City, on the National Mall between the Lincoln

Memorial and the Washington Monument, to the south of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool. With permits from the National Park Service, Resurrection City housed three thousand participants from poor communities all over the country. Over fifty multiracial organizations participated in the planning, and nine regional caravans were launched to bring the participants—Black, white, Native American, and Latino—to Washington from May 14 until June 24, 1968: the “Eastern Caravan,” the “Appalachia Trail,” the “Southern Caravan,” the “Midwest Caravan,” the “Indian Trail,” the “San Francisco Caravan,” the “Western Caravan,” the “Mule Train,” and the “Freedom Train” (Cave and Eveleigh 2017).

A pan-racial coalition of the poor, the aggrieved, and the oppressed suddenly took charge of fifteen sprawling acres of West Potomac Park, running across the reflecting pool to the base of the Lincoln Memorial (Cave and Eveleigh 2017). Corky Gonzales and Myles Horton were there, holding workshops near the acrid stench of burning oil drums heaped with refuse. With guitars and banjos in hand, Pete Seeger, Peter, Paul and Mary, and Jimmy “burn baby burn” Collier helped improvise singalongs and square dances to revive the collectivist spirit dampened by twenty-eight (out of forty-two) days of rain, dismal days plagued by mud and pooling water, sometimes hip-deep, that shifted the soggy ground under the plywood-frame tents creatively festooned with political slogans such as “Soul Power,” “Indian Power,” “Chicano Power,” and “Power to the People.” Henry Crow Dog, an Oglala Sioux medicine man from the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, was there and challenged Seeger and Collier when they sang “This Land Is Your Land” on the grounds that the land belonged to Native Americans—it was his land (Kaufman 2011, 203). The poorest of the Appalachian whites were given shoes and jackets by their Chicano and Puerto Rican counterparts. Scattered among Resurrection City’s 650 flywood and plastic-sheeting huts, you could find a lean-to city hall (and its SCLC mayor, Jesse Jackson), a medical tent, dining facilities, a “Poor People’s University,” a nursery, a cultural centre, and an internal police force. But there were only a couple of showers for the entire camp. Plastic snow fencing separated the inhabitants of Resurrection City from the crowds outside. Military intelligence and FBI agents posed as reporters and wiretapped the campaign, and were accused by Ralph Abernathy of fomenting violence inside the encampment.

And while history has often recorded Resurrection City to have been a strategic failure marred by racial tensions, poor leadership, and insufficient planning, the real source of the failure of Resurrection City is best captured by Robert Chase (1998), who writes,

The failure of the Poor People's Campaign extended beyond questions of leadership and tactics. Ultimately, the PPC failed because the traditional constituency of the Civil Rights movement—the white, middle-class, liberals—was repulsed by the goals of the campaign itself. Bringing the poor together as a racial amalgamation of similar interests and goals heightened the issue of class in America and, consequently, Americans came to view the Civil Rights movement as an instrument questioning the legitimacy of America's economic system and its capitalistic "way of life."

The inhabitants of Resurrection City were systematically tear-gassed on June 24, 1968, and the shantytown was demolished by bulldozers that entered from 17th Street after most of the residents, many vomiting and choking from the tear gas, had been chased out. As the Civil Disturbance Squad ran final sweeps of the encampment, arresting those who had refused to leave, songs of human freedom rang out.

I propose that we set up a Resurrection City outside the grounds of Mar-a-Lago, Trump's Winter White House, and that the caravans streaming in from across the country carry with them the wishes and prayers of all those who are suffering today under the brutality of everyday life in capitalist America.

## Notes

- 1 As a point of interest, DeVos is also the sister of Erik Prince, founder of the infamous private military company that made international headlines in September 2007 after its operatives gunned down seventeen Iraqi civilians, including a nine-year-old boy in Baghdad's Nisour Square (Risen 2014).
- 2 These are predictable four-part cycles, the latest of which Strauss and Howe refer to as the Fourth Turning. These cycles are based on a series of generational archetypes—the Artists, the Prophets, the Nomads, and the Heroes.

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